

# David Abell

**D**AVID ABELL, one of the most important, and successful, owners and supporters of Mark Johnston Racing, died last month. He passed away in Nottingham on November 29 at the age of 80.

After graduating from Leeds University with a BA in Economics, David began a distinguished career in business. He held senior positions in Ford and British Leyland before becoming owner and chairman of Suter plc from 1978 to 1996. He also gained a Diploma in Business Administration from the London School of Economics.

From 1997 he was chairman of Jourdan plc, and he also had a number of interests in other businesses such as Coffee Republic.

Away from the business world, David had two great sporting passions – racing and rugby. He was a hugely significant owner and breeder of racehorses, both on the Flat and in the National Hunt sphere; and for more than two decades he was on the board of Leicester Tigers Rugby Union Football Club.

As an owner, David supported the emerging young trainer Mark Johnston by

sending him horses of the calibre of Branston Abby, Star Rage, Virgin Soldier, Ice and Kayo. What a legend Branston Abby was! The winner of 25 of her 97 career races, Branston Abby won 11 Listed races at home and abroad, including at four separate German courses.

She equalled, and then surpassed, Laurel Queen's post-war British record of wins (22) by an equine female and finished second in the Group 1 Haydock Park Sprint Cup in 1995. Branston Abby's remains are buried in front of Kingsley House in Middleham.

Star Rage was another prolific winner for David. He chalked up nine wins in one season and has a special place in the history of Mark Johnston Racing as the winner of the Grade 2 Fighting Fifth Hurdle at Newcastle in 1997.

In 1999, Virgin Soldier became the first horse owned by David to win six consecutive races, while in the same year his Ice won the Swiss 2,000 Guineas at Dielsdorf in the hands of Kieren Fallon.

David's horses seemed to have the happy knack of recording multiple wins. His Vindaloo won 11 races in one year, Kayo ran up a total of 13 career wins and Virgin Soldier won 16! But Star Rage took



the biscuit, with 28 wins and 23 seconds in a career that extended over nine seasons.

Sprinting star Branston Abby was homebred by David out of the Cawston's Clown mare, Tuxford Hideaway. From that mare, David also bred Desert Deer, who landed the Group 2 Sandown Mile in 2003 for the stable, and owner Jaber Abdullah.

'David Abell played a huge part in my early career,' Mark Johnston told the Klarion.

'He thoroughly enjoyed his racing and wasn't afraid to campaign his horses abroad. We had huge fun with Branston Abby who will always hold a special place in my affections.'

The thoughts of all at Johnston Racing are with David's wife, Juliana, and with his children Simon, Jonathan, Martin, Chris and Kate. ■



Branston Abby winning one of her 25 races in David Abell's colours



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